(b) whether any foreign assistance has been required in this regard; and

(c) if so, what are the names of the countries from where assistance is being sought?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE PRODUCTION AND SUPPLIES IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL). (a) to (c) The modernisation of the Armed Forces is a continuous process. Keeping in view the changed security environment and induction of the latest tech nology weapon systems in the region, our plans for procurement of weapon systems for modernisation of Armed Forces are kept constantly under review to meet any threat to our peace, progress, security and stability.

For the modernisation of the Armed Forces, import of sophisticated weapon systems are resorted to, when these arc not available in adequate quantities through indigenous sources. Such imports are made from a number of countries. Orders of import are placed keeping in view factors such as technical specification prices, delivery schedules, credit terms etc.

It will not be in the national interest to divulge information regarding details of modernisation effort's and sources for the procurement of defence stores.

Soda-Economic study of North Bengal Districts

1995. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

fa) whether Government have decided to send a team of experts of the Planning Commission to study the sociopolitico-econoimic conditions in the North Bengal districts;

(b) if so, whether such a team has since visited the districts of North Bengal;

(c) whether any report has since been submitted by the team; and

(d) if so. the details of the if any?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI SUKH RAM): fa) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Separate administration arrangements for Rural Development

1996. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased t_0 refer to the reply to Unstorred Question 3023 given m the Rajya Sabha on the 20th August, 1987 and state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the report of Dr. G. V. K. Rao Committee set up by the Planning Commission, which recommended for separate administration arrangements for rural developments; and

(b) if so, whether any action has since been taken on the recommendation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PROGRAMME IM PLEMENTATION (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Comments from 29 States/ Union Territory Administrations have been received on thp recommendations made by Dr. G. V. K. Ra_0 Committee. The matter has to be placed before the National Development Council (NDC) for consideration before final decisions are taken.

Goodwill Visit of INS Ganga to East and South East Asia

1997. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Navy's guided missile carrier, INs Ganga, had gone

on a two and a half months' tour to East and South-East Asia;

(b) if so, what was the objective of this tour and which countries and ports it called on; and

(c) whether it has returned to India without any incident during the course of its trip to these countries?

THE .MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE PRODUCTION AND SUPPLIES IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL): (a) and (b) INS Ganga. a Frigate, paid a Flag showing and Goodwill visit to East and South-East Asian Ports from 20th July to 6th September. 1987. The Ship visited Belawan (Indonesia). Manila (Phillipines). Tokyo (Japan). Hong Kong and Port Kelang (Malaysia).

(c) Yes, Sir.

Tardy implementation of Welfare Schemes for Ex-Servicemen

1998. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:;

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been tardy implementation of various schemes for rehabilitation and welfare of ex-servicemen:

(b) whether it is also a fact lhat vacancies reserved for ex servicemen in Government and public sector undertakings are not being filled up as per regulations:

(c) whether it is a fact that zila sainik boards are not functioning properly: and

(d) if so, what are the reasons .therefor and what steps Government are taking to implement satisfactorily the various welfare schemes for ex-servicemen?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE PRODUCTION AND SUPPLIES IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL): (a) It is not a fact-that there has been tardy implementation of various schemes for rehabilitation and welfare of ex-servicemen. A number of schemes like Preparing Ex-servicemen for Self-employment (PEXSEM), On the Job Training Scheme and Serf employment for Ex-servicemen (SEMFEX) are being implemented for the rehabilitation and welfare of ex-servicemen.

PEXSEM— This scheme has been launched since 1983-84. From 1-4-86, the expenditure is equally shared by the Centre and the States, The objective of the scheme is to impart vocational training to retired defence personnel (JCOs and ORs) to enable them to set up their self-employment units close to their homes. It is in operation in eighteen districts spread over ten States. As on date, 2977 retired defence personnel have been trained under the scheme. Nine hundred and tweny-seven of these trained personnel have set up their own self-employment ventures and one hundred and fifteen personnel have secured salaried employment. There have been some problems of prompt release of State share funds and sanction of loans by commercial Banks.

Apart from the PEXSEM scheme, there is a scheme to impart per-re-lease training to retiring defence personnel in various management courses and trades to enable them to gel salaried employment and set up their own self-employment ventures.

On the Job Training Scheme;

The objective of "On the Job Training Scheme" is to train non-technical personnel of all the three Services. They are given intensive technical training for 9 months in 10 basic trades; namely Fitter, Turner, Machinist. Weldor, Mech (MV). line-Man, Carpenter, Moulder, Plumber- and Book-Binder. Training is imparted by Public Sector Undertakings and Ordnance Factories located through-